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CONFERENCE ON DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION ON NEWER EDUCATIONAL MEDIA, REPORT OF NATIONAL SCHOOL PUBLIC RELATIONS ASSOCIATION, WASHINGTON, D.C., DECEMBER 19-21, 1960.

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A CONFERENCE OF SCHOOL PUBLIC RELATIONS ADMINISTRATORS WAS HELD TO FORMULATE PROPOSALS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR A LONG-RANGE INFORMATION PROGRAM FOR THE ENCOURAGEMENT AND MORE EFFECTIVE USE OF THE NEWER EDUCATIONAL MEDIA. CONCLUSIONS DERIVED FROM THE TOPICS DISCUSSED WERE THAT SPECIFIC PROJECTS INVOLVING THE NEWER MEDIA SHOULD BE DEVELOPED THROUGH OTHER EXISTING GROUPS, BUT THAT THERE IS A MAJOR NEED FOR A RATHER LARGE SINGLE PROJECT WHICH WOULD (1) IDENTIFY NEWS AND MATERIALS WHICH WOULD APPEAL TO AND AFFECT THE THINKING OF EDUCATORS AND OF THE PUBLIC AT LARGE, (2) REPORT ON SUCH MATERIALS IN A FORM WHICH WOULD HAVE IMPACT UPON THESE AUDIENCES, AND (3) EFFECTIVELY DISTRIBUTE THE RESULTING MATERIALS. (JC)

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1st part

REPORT
OF NATIONAL SCHOOL PUBLIC RELATIONS ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE ON DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION ON NEWER EDUCATIONAL MEDIA UNDER PART B OF TITLE VII OF THE NATIONAL DEFENSE EDUCATION ACT

3rd part

Held in Washington, D.C., December 19-21, 1960, under a grant from The United States Office of Education

A conference of selected key executives in school public relations positions throughout the United States was held in Washington, D.C., December 19-21, 1960, to formulate proposals and suggestions for a long-range information program for the encouragement and more effective use of the newer media for educational purposes. This conference was held under a grant from the United States Office of Education under Part B of Title VII of the National Defense Education Act. Invited to it were selected members of the National School Public Relations Association, staff members of NSPRA, representatives from the Office of Education, two consultants, and two guests in key positions in relation to proposed programs.

The participants were: Don E. Matthews, assistant superintendent of schools in charge of special services, Dallas, Texas; O. H. English, superintendent of schools, Abington, Pa.; H. Bailey Gardner, director, public information service, Kansas City (Mo.) public schools; Willson T. Maynard, director of public relations, Oregon Education Association, Portland, Oregon; Richard E. Nielsen, supervisor of publications, St. Paul (Minn.) public schools; Allan M. West, executive secretary, Utah Education Association, Salt Lake City, Utah; Roy K. Wilson, secretary-treasurer of NSPRA and director of the Press-Radio Division of the National Education Association; Janet Kroll, managing editor of Education Scope; and Mildred S. Wainger, executive assistant on the NSPRA staff.

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Consultants were Laurence B. Johnson, secretary-treasurer of the Educational Press Association and director of communications for the New Jersey Education Association, and Herman R. Allen, former education writer for the Associated Press and former education editor of Newsweek magazine. Walter Stone, director of the Educational Media Branch; Seth Spaulding, chief of the Educational Materials & Services section of that branch; and Carroll Hanson, director of the Publications Services Branch, all of the U.S. Office of Education, attended the meetings; and Don White, executive vice-president of the National Audio-Visual Association and Anna Hyer, executive secretary of the NEA's Department of Audio-Visual Instruction also met with the group.

GENERAL ORGANIZATION

The conference held five full sessions and a number of smaller group meetings. At various times it heard Mr. Stone, Mr. Spaulding, Mr. Hanson, Mr. White, and Miss Hyer summarize various aspects of the Title VII projects and problems in the field. It considered two sets of working papers prepared by the consultants, and at times divided into smaller groups to weigh problems and activities in local school systems, states, and teacher organizations. The following is a summary of what appeared to be the general thinking of the conference in the various areas which it discussed.

THE PROBLEM

Title VII of the National Defense Education Act is concerned with "more effective utilization of television, radio, motion pictures and related media for educational purposes." It carried an appropriation of $3,000,000 for 1958-59 and $5,000,000 for each of the three following years. It directed the U.S. Commissioner of Education to conduct, assist, and

foster research and experimentation in the development and evaluation of projects involving these media. Under a second part of that title, "in order to disseminate information concerning new educational media to State or local educational agencies for use in their public elementary and secondary schools and to institutions of higher education," the Commissioner is directed to:

(1) make studies and surveys to determine the need for increased or improved utilization of these media for educational purposes;

(2) prepare and publish catalogs, reviews, bibliographies, abstracts, analyses of research and experimentation, and <u>such other materials as are generally useful</u> in the encouragement and more effective use of these media for educational purposes.

He may also, upon request, provide advice, counsel, technical assistance, and demonstrations to these agencies and institutions undertaking to utilize such media of communication to increase the quality or depth or broaden the scope of their educational programs.

Existing projects under Part A of Title VII, thus far, include a great deal of valuable research, much of which is completed and more nearing completion. These projects contain many valuable findings. Current projects under Part B, however, while gathering together much of the available information and research findings, make little provision for the wide public exposure of the information thus assembled and developed. Mr. Stone pointed to a major need for the dissemination of this information in the manner intended in the act so that it will result in significant changes in what actually happens in elementary and secondary schools and in institutions of higher education.

In the broadest sense, then, the problem before the conference was the encouragement of more effective use of television, radio, motion pictures, and related media of communication for educational purposes. The NDEA makes clear that this includes, but is not limited to, the results of the research and experimentation being conducted under the act.

BROAD APPROACHES

The material to be disseminated or communicated will consist largely of (1) evidence that these media can be used effectively; and (2) methods by which it can be used.

The "audience" or "audiences" to whom it is desired to disseminate the information can tentatively be identified under the following heads:

1. (specifically mentioned in the act)
    a. State or local educational agencies (for use in their public elementary or secondary schools);
    b. Institutions of higher education.
2. Educators and education groups in general
    a. Administrative and supervisory personnel--superintendents, principals, curriculum workers, specialists;
    b. Teachers--elementary (by subject and grade); high school (by subjects, guidance, etc.);
    c. College faculties.
3. The general public--including board of education members, parents, and other specific groups.

Significant media to be considered in approaching these audiences include (1) the newer media themselves (radio, TV, motion pictures, filmstrips, etc.); (2) the press; (3) magazines--general; (4) the education press; (5) special (occasional) publications; (6) meetings, conferences, etc.; (7) exhibits, demonstrations, etc.; (8) personal contact (word of mouth).

The following were criteria suggested in considering proposals in this area:

1. Would this make a significant contribution to the purpose?
2. Is it practical and worthwhile?
3. What kind of machinery is needed?
4. Who could or should do it?
5. Has it national, regional, state, or local significance?

SOME SPECIFIC PROPOSALS

In discussing some suggested projects, the conference seemed in general agreement on the desirability of a series of well-written bulletins directed to specific education audiences by subject matter or gnade on the use of the newer media; of a regular flow of articles, releases, and especially of article leads to education magazines across the nation covering teaching techniques, preparation of materials, classroom use, and administrative problems with the newer media; a survey of public attitudes toward the newer media to serve as a guide in approaches for information projects; a survey of teacher attitudes toward the newer media; assembling or producing a library of films demonstrating the use of the newer media; efforts to produce more teachers skilled in the use of the newer media; a steady flow of news releases on the findings, activities, etc., of Title VII projects (with pictures designed for newspapers and magazines of general interest); efforts to promote conferences of teachers, administrators, etc., on the use of the newer media, or to take advantage of existing conferences and meetings. It was fully recognized that some of these projects are already covered by existing projects and contracts. It was also recognized that at the present time encouragement of centers for radio, television,

etc., in states where they do not now exist, and for pilot projects in individual schools may be provided for by other legislation now before Congress.

LARGE PROJECT

After considerable discussion the conference finally appeared to take the position, however, that some approaches to the problem which involved the use of the newer media themselves might well be handled directly through other organizations such as the Educational Media Council, DAVI, and some commercial sponsors. It was favorably impressed by a report on a proposal from Hearst Metrotone News for a series of filmed news releases through Telenews, MGM News of the Day, and subsequent 15-minute films for other uses; and by an outline for an exhibit project offered by Design and Production Incorporated.

It recognized, however, that these and any similar projects involve the identification of what is happening in the whole area of the use of the newer media, and the availability of clear, accurate reports on what is happening. Conference thinking, therefore, was directed toward the need for a large project which would:

1. identify in the use of the newer media in education the research and other activities already under way (either completed or nearing completion) which have nationwide, significant implications for education;

2. secure the facts concerning these activities which are significant to educators and to the general public, and which are needed for the wide communication of this information;

3. disseminate such information as widely as possible, both to the profession at large and to the general public.

PROCEDURES

1. Identification--Leads would be needed on such activities, with provision for the evaluation of such leads by professionally competent sources. Such leads would come from existing or easily obtainable reports on research projects in progress or completed, including those under Part A, from reports from newer media sources themselves on activities deserving wider communication; reports from education sources (many readily available through existing NSPRA contacts), and reports from the educational press.

2. Securing the Facts--Facts would be needed on the significant leads thus obtained, with the facts accurately documented and supported by illustrative and anecdotal materials, to the end that the project office would become a center of popular and professional information on such projects of significance in educational improvement. In many cases the project center would have to send persons skilled in interviewing and in obtaining information, and in reporting on such projects for personal investigation of the projects or leads in question.

3. Dissemination--This information should be made known to school administrators, supervisors, teachers, etc., through established media, such as the newer media themselves; the established educational press; special publications (e.g. What Research Says to the Teacher); conferences, workshops, and demonstrations; and exhibits and conventions. Public acceptance and support of the newer educational media should be sought through the newer media themselves (motion pictures, filmstrips, television, etc.); newspapers, magazines, and other publications for general distribution; information for free-lance writers; leads to individual publications; contacts with daily and weekly press; syndicates, news services, etc.; and citizen conferences, provision for speakers, etc.

Of all the procedures outlined, the most important, of course, is "dissemination." This would be carried out through a variety of means. The principal ones would be:

(with respect to the profession)

a. preparation of articles by a staff for the nonprofit state and association journals;

b. assistance to editors of commercial education publications in preparation of articles tailored to their needs;

c. assistance to the producers of new media materials in preparing presentations that would themselves tell the story of the newer media;

d. arrangement of conferences to include not only working classroom educators but those administrative persons (most notably perhaps the editors of education journals) who are in a position to promote the intelligent use of proven new media methods;

e. arrangement for the design and construction of traveling exhibits to be displayed at conventions and other gatherings of professional groups.

(with respect to the general public)

a. assistance to education editors and other staff members of newspapers, magazines, syndicates, and other general circulation media in preparation of articles tailored to their needs. Although a certain number of routine "press releases" would be unavoidable, the emphasis would be on personal contact with editors in developing the stories they themselves want.

b. maintaining contact with free-lance writers who might be sold on submitting articles on the new media to general-circulation magazines.

c. assistance to the television, radio, and motion picture industries in preparation of programs and presentations involving new media education.

d. establishment of a speakers bureau to provide qualified persons to address meetings of nonprofessional groups, act as panel moderators, etc.

e. to maintain close relationship with citizen groups such as service clubs and labor unions, with a special interest in education, and to capitalize on this interest by assisting them to keep their members informed about the new media.

It was the consensus of the conference that while many projects involving the newer media themselves (the actual development of films, radio and television programs, filmstrips, exhibits, conferences, speakers bureaus, etc.) might well be regarded as separate projects--to be handled as direct contracts or subcontracts as needs indicate--there is a real need for a major project providing for nationwide identification, fact-gathering, and dissemination, with its materials and results also available to some of the more specialized projects as well.

It was agreed that there is at least one existing nongovernmental organization equipped to handle such a project. That is the National School Public Relations Association, already well-established and actively engaged in fact-gathering and fact dissemination in allied areas, both to educators and to the general public about education. It is close to the teachers, and to education in general. It is also close to the media which would have to be used, and it is well-accepted by the general public through the wide dissemination of its current publications. It has the added advantage of being free from any commercial interests or alliances.

Within the framework of such a general proposal, a number of specific proposals and suggestions seemed to have general conference approval. These were in such areas as: (a) evaluation of leads; (b) specific suggestions for materials; (c) need for and use of personal contacts; (d) quality control (feedback); and (e) miscellaneous.

EVALUATION OF LEADS

A project of this general nature should be primarily devoted to providing factual information in a form readily absorbed by educators and the public at large, and not to presenting evaluations of results. Some evaluation, however, is unavoidable, even in the selection of what is to be reported. This should be done with the greatest care, and with the advice and assistance of competent help.

MATERIALS

The quality of any materials coming out of such a project must be very high--quality is far more important than quantity.

The need of administrative heads of school systems is for brief, easily-read presentations of the material available in a specific area. From recognition of this need came the suggestion of a series of "Special Reports" of about four pages each, which would present the current knowledge and thinking in a very specific area (e.g. teaching machines) as it stands at the moment. It was indicated that advance listing of such reports would be helpful in local school systems--i.e. for a superintendent to have a year's schedule of such reports in advance.

It was emphasized that stories from a project should be written, if possible, by people with status in the field. This would apply especially if such a project could supply a series of stories or articles as a package to state journals or general outlets.

DISTRIBUTION

Very concrete suggestions were offered for the distribution of the proposed "Special Reports" or similar materials. It was suggested that

the primary distribution of these be to the administrative heads of local school systems. Each copy so distributed, however, would carry a postcard or return coupon with which the local school head could request additional copies for distribution in his community to such groups as his administrative and supervisory staff, boards of education, key local laymen, etc. A form something like the following was suggested:

> Please send _____ copies of _____ for use of the following persons within the school system:
> ( ) principals ( ) school board members
> ( ) teachers ( ) teachers association
> ( ) PTA's ( ) others
>
> NOTE: After (date) these materials will not be available.

It was emphasized that such materials should always carry detailed information and suggestions on how they can or should be used. It was also the thought that budgetary provision should be made for making the additional copies of these materials available without cost.

PERSONAL CONTACTS

Methods of disseminating such information and follow-up through personal contact was recognized as most important. It was not clearly agreed whether this should be done through the regional offices of the U.S. Office of Education, or by personnel attached to state departments or associations, or by the project staff itself. It was thought, however, that such personal contacts should be on a top-priority basis, with the administrative heads of school systems, and should seek to call their attention to and promote the use of the materials being prepared in and distributed from the center (Washington) office. Personnel engaged in

this activity must be prepared to explain the contents of the materials and suggest uses. Among the uses suggested were discussions at teacher meetings, conventions, conferences, PTA meetings, local AAUW, National Council of Churches, etc.

QUALITY CONTROL (Feedback)

To be sure of continuing reports on the project and evaluation of results, it was felt that financial provision should be made for some such individuals as those in the present conference to meet regularly--probably quarterly--and that prior to such meetings, those involved should be asked to spend a few days on field trips in their own areas to evaluate the impact of the program and gather suggestions for its improvement.

MISCELLANEOUS

Among the other ideas and suggestions which seemed to have considerable support among those attending the conference were:

1. to set up state advisory committees on the newer media, using key education and lay groups. Such groups could arrange for demonstrations, exhibits, conferences, etc.; supply state news and news leads to the national center; and through roving reporters supply news and material to state and local education publications.

2. Mailing lists would be a major problem for any project of this nature. A list of administrative heads of school systems alone would be expensive to set up and maintain. If such a list is not available elsewhere (in the Office of Education, e.g.), financial provision for it and other necessary lists, and for the disposition of such lists should be covered in any project proposal.

3. The practice of selling materials--even at cost--produced through this project was generally deemed inadvisable. It was the feeling that they should be made available free in the quantities needed (though with a production deadline clearly stated), and that any project budget should provide for this.

4. It was repeatedly stressed that a project of the type proposed should serve other dissemination projects, and it was suggested that Mr. Spaulding's office would be a natural liaison point.

5. It was repeatedly suggested that the work of reporters on the project staff could be greatly supplemented by the use of skilled outside writers, such as members of the Education Writers Association.

CONCLUSION

It was the consensus of the conference that, in general, specific projects involving the newer media themselves, conferences (with some exceptions), exhibits, etc., should be developed through other existing groups, but that there is a major need for a rather large single project which would: (1) identify news and materials in this area which would appeal to and affect the thinking of educators in general and of the public at large; (2) report on such material in a form or forms which would have impact upon these audiences; and (3) effectively distribute the resulting materials. It was agreed that the National School Public Relations Association was a desirable contractor with the U.S. Office of Education for such a project, and it was agreed that Mr. Allen and Mr. Wilson should attempt to develop, as quickly as possible, a specific proposal for such a project along the lines indicated.

Laurence B. Johnson, Consultant